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General Bids Paris Scrap Secret Service

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PARIS, Nov. 26—One of the country's more prestigious figures called today for the dissolution of the French secret service, which had been wracked by scandals involving drugs, counterfeiting and treason.

A day after the Government and the Defense Minster, Michel Debré, declared their confidence in the Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage, known by its initials, S.D.E.C.E., Gen. Pierre Billotte, wartime chief of staff to General de Gaulle and later Defense Minister, said in a radio interview that the matter was far more serious than Mr. Debré had indicated.

The general said that he had warned a year ago in a report that scandal would break unless the agency was reformed.

The general said it was scandalous that no "credible, complete and stinging denial" could be made to the narcotics charges laid to French agents by indictments in the United States District Court in Newark.

"It is scandalous that one can ask today whether S.D.E.C.E. has been counterfeiting foreign money," he added, in allusion to the $17,000 in counterfeit American currency found in the apartment used here by Roger Delouette, a former agent who pleaded guilty in Newark on Nov. 16 to smuggling heroin into the United States and named Col. Paul Fournier, a high S.D.E.C.E. official, as having organized the operation.

General Billotte, referring to "libels" inspired by present or former agents, concluded: "This house no longer belongs among republican institutions."

One of the gravest "libels" arising from the Delouette affair was set off by Col. Roger Barberot, an associate of General Billotte's in the left wing of the Gaullist movement. It has now caused a new airing of the story narrated by Leon Uris in the novel "Topaz," that a high French secret service officer had been working for Moscow. The novel was based on an account by Philippe Thyraud de Vosjoly, who defected from the French service in Washington in 1963.

Before Colonel Barberot's interviews, newspapers here recalled that the traitor in the novel had worked for Philippe Henriot, the Vichy Government's Information Minister, during the war; had later served as a military attaché, and then joined the secret service.

Colonel Barberot declared that Col. Jacques Beaumont, also known as René Bertrand was dismissed as operations chief of the S.D.E.C.E. last year on "suspicion of high treason Colonel Beaumont, who has announced a libel suit against Colonel Barberot, worked for Mr. Henriot during the war, then served in Yugoslavia before joining the secret service.

The current troubles of the secret agency recall the Ben Barka case of 1965. At noon on Oct. 29, Mehdi Ben Barka, a Moroccan leftist opposition leader living in Paris in exile, was picked up by two members of the Paris police drug squad. Mr. Ben Barka was never seen again.

Moroccans who saw the arrest identified the detectives, and in the trial that followed it emerged that the kidnapping had been organized by Antoine Lopez, identified as an agent of the S.D.E.C.E.

Lopez and one of the detectives received prison terms and the agency lost its independence, coming under the control of the Defense Ministry.

In the current press coverage, the picture of the agency is sometimes highly colored with borrowings from Ian Fleming, but some facts emerge.

Like the United States, France has half a dozen intelligence agencies. The real counterespionage agency is the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire.

S.D.E.C.E., like the Central Intelligence Agency, is the chief service for foreign espionage, intelligence gathering and, if the lurid accounts are to be believed, "dirty tricks."

Its headquarters is a large U-shaped compound in eastern Paris, called "The Swimming Pool."

The chief operating division is called the Service de Recherche which divides the world into continental sectors. Its files, now computerized, are said to contain data on 10 million persons.

The counterespionage section, also called T. R. 7, is a special foreign operation designed to watch French agents and the foreign agencies that might catch them.

Finally, there is the Service Action section, said to comprise about 100 acres of all trades. These are reported to get their training at sites near Orléans and in Corsica.

There, according to an account in the daily France-Soir, the agents are taught, in addition to karate and eluding pursuers, "how to resist torture and avoid traps in interrogations with nerves of steel."

One of the students, it has been widely reported, was Roger Delouette, when Delouette was caught in New Jersey, he underwent interrogation and began talking.